

Message Text

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SUBJ: REQUESTS BY VIETNAMESE REFUGEES FOR RESETTLEMENT
IN U.S.

1. SUMMARY: RECENT NEWS ACCOUNTS OF PRC-VIETNAMESE REFUGEE TALKS GIVE THE DISQUIETING INDICATION THAT THE PRC MAY BE PREPARED TO DEPORT REFUGEES FROM VIETNAM WHO HAVE ESCAPED TO THE PRC. TWO VIETNAMESE REFUGEES FROM HO CHI MINH CITY APPEARED AT THE LIAISON OFFICE AUGUST 23 APPEALING FOR ASSISTANCE IN BEING RESETTLED IN THE UNITED STATES CLAIMING THAT THEY UNDERSTOOD THAT THEY WOULD BE SENT BACK TO VIETNAM INVOLUNTARILY SHOULD THEY REJECT RESETTLEMENT IN ONE OF TWENTY-FIVE "OVERSEAS CHINESE FARMS" (HUA-CH'IAO NUNG-CH'ANG) IN SOUTH CHINA. THE TWO SAID THAT "THERE COULD NOT BE MORE THAN 2,000 SOUTH VIETNAMESE REFUGEES NOW IN CANTON, A TINY FRACTION OF THE TOTAL NUMBER OF REFUGEES FROM THE SRV". END SUMMARY.

2. PEOPLE'S DAILY REPORTED ON AUGUST 20 THE PRC GOVERNMENT'S STATEMENT AT THE THIRD SESSION OF THE PRC-SRV NEGOTIATIONS ON THE OVERSEAS CHINESE QUESTION. THE PRC SIDE INSISTED THAT THE 1955 BILATERAL AGREEMENT PROTECTING THE
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RIGHTS OF OVERSEAS CHINESE (HOAS) BE HONORED BY THE SRV. THE CHINESE SIDE, REPRESENTED BY CHUNG HSI-TUNG, DREW A DISTINCT LINE BETWEEN HOAS WHO HAD RETAINED PRC CITIZENSHIP AND THOSE WHO HAD ACQUIRED DRVN OR SRV NATIONALITY. "THE CHINESE SIDE," STATED CHUNG, "CONSIDERS PEOPLE OF CHINESE ORIGIN WHO HAVE ALREADY ADOPTED VN NATIONALITY 'AS HAVING FORFEITED THEIR CHINESE NATIONALITY'". CHINA WAS COMPELLED

BY "HUMANITARIAN CONSIDERATIONS" TO RECEIVE AND RESETTLE REFUGEES FROM THE SRV, INCLUDING "VIETNAMESE CITIZENS," BUT EMPHASIZED THE PRC'S BELIEF THAT THE SRV "HAS THE RESPONSIBILITY TO RECEIVE THEM (VN CITIZEN REFUGEES) BACK INTO VIETNAM" AND TO RESETTLE THEM. IN MAKING THE SAME POINT, CHUNG ADDED THAT HE HOPED THE SRV WOULD MAKE "PROPER ARRANGEMENTS" TO RECEIVE AND RESETTLE CHINESE NATIONALS WHO "WISHED" TO RETURN TO THE SRV. THE DISTINCTION SEEMINGLY IS MADE BETWEEN THOSE PRC NATIONALS WHO WISH TO RETURN TO THE SRV AND SRV NATIONALS WHO SHOULD BE ACCEPTED BACK BY THE SRV WHETHER THEY WANT TO RETURN OR NOT.

3. IN HIS STATEMENT CHUNG MADE IT CLEAR THAT HE WOULD NOT ADDRESS THE PROBLEM OF CHINESE NATIONALS FROM THE FORMER REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM. THEIR STATUS WAS NOT COVERED BY THE 1955 AGREEMENT AND CHUNG SAID HE WOULD LEAVE THEM FOR DISCUSSION ON ANOTHER OCCASION. THE PRC HAS PREVIOUSLY STATED THAT IT CONSIDERS THEIR FORCED ACQUISITION OF VIETNAMESE CITIZENSHIP UNDER THE NGO DINH DIEM REGIME ILLEGAL. HANOI, ON THE OTHER HAND, HAS STATED THAT WITH THE EXCEPTION OF A SMALL NUMBER OF PEOPLE WHO HELD DOCUMENTATION FROM TAIWAN OR HONG KONG, ALL CHINESE RESIDENTS OF THE SOUTH ARE CONSIDERED TO HAVE ACQUIRED VIETNAMESE NATIONALITY.

4. TWO HOA REFUGEES FROM HO CHI MINH CITY APPEARED UNANNOUNCED AT USLO PEKING ON AUGUST 23 SEEKING ASSISTANCE IN RESETTLING LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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IN THE UNITED STATES. THEY ADVISED THAT THEY HAD BEEN RVN CITIZENS, BUT THAT THEY HAD NO SRV DOCUMENTATION. TOGETHER WITH FIVE OTHER SAIGON CHINESE THEY TRAVELLED NORTH THROUGH VIETNAM ON TRAINS, DRESSED AS PEASANTS AND CARRYING NO IDENTIFICATION DOCUMENTS. THEY CROSSED THE CHINESE BORDER ILLEGALLY THROUGH THE FORESTS AT DONG DANG. AFTER CROSSING THEY RECEIVED WATER AND RICE FROM CHINESE POLICE AT A SMALL VILLAGE, AND WERE ABLE TO PAY FOR TRAIN TICKETS TO NANNING WITH \$100.00 IN GREENBACKS WHICH THEY HAD BROUGHT FROM THE SOUTH. THEIR IDENTITIES WERE NEVER CHALLENGED DURING THEIR TRAVELS IN THE PRC, THE POLICE ALONG THE WAY ACCEPTING THEIR STORY OF INTENT TO TRAVEL TO HONG KONG BASED ON PHOTOCOPIES OF OLD RVN IDENTITY CARDS AND BIRTH CERTIFICATES.

5. ONCE IN CANTON, THEIR APPLICATIONS TO EXIT INTO HONG KONG WERE DENIED BY PROVINCIAL PUBLIC SECURITY BUREAU (PSB) OFFICERS WHO SAID THAT THEIR NATIONALITY WAS "UNCERTAIN" AND THAT THEREFORE THE PSB WAS NOT IN A POSITION TO APPROVE EXIT. AS REFUGEES, HOWEVER, THE PSB OFFERED THEM RESETTLEMENT IN ANY ONE OF TWENTY-FIVE OVERSEAS CHINESE FARMS. AT THE FARMS THEY COULD AWAIT THE PROCESSING OF THE NECESSARY PAPERS AND PERHAPS LATER ON COULD REAPPLY FOR EXIT. VIEWING

THIS CURE AS LITTLE BETTER THAN THE DISEASE, THE GROUP DECLINED THE OFFER AND RETURNED TO THE CANTON OVERSEAS CHINESE HOTEL WHERE THEY WERE LIVING OFF REMITTANCES FROM RELATIVES IN HONG KONG. ONE OF THE GROUP BOUGHT A TRAIN TICKET TO SHUMCHUN IN THE HOPE OF BLUFFING HIS WAY ACROSS THE BORDER, BUT HE WAS REFUSED EXIT BY PRC IMMIGRATION OFFICERS WHO TOLD HIM TO RETURN TO CANTON.

6. TWO OF THE GROUP HIT UPON THE IDEA OF TRAVELING TO PEKING SEEKING PRC EXIT DOCUMENTATION FROM THE PRC STATE COUNCIL OVERSEAS CHINESE AFFAIRS OFFICE, AND VISAS TO HONG KONG FROM THE BRITISH EMBASSY. AGAIN, WITHOUT DOCUMENTATION OR PERMISSION, THESE TWO VIRTUALLY STATELESS VIETNAMESE BOUGHT TRAIN TICKETS AND ARRIVED IN PEKING AUGUST 3. THE OVER-LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SEAS CHINESE AFFAIRS OFFICE TOLD THEM TO RETURN TO CANTON AND ACCEPT RESETTLEMENT ON A FARM, AND THE BRITISH EMBASSY TOLD THEM TO WAIT WHILE THEIR VISA APPLICATIONS WERE BEING PROCESSED, PERHAPS A THREE TO FOUR WEEK WAIT. THE BRITISH VICE CONSUL INFORMED THEM THAT HE WAS NOT VERY OPTIMISTIC THAT VISA APPROVALS WOULD BE GRANTED.

7. THE TWO WERE SATISFIED TO SIT IN PEKING'S OVERSEAS CHINESE HOTEL AND AWAIT THE BRITISH RESPONSE WHEN THEY READ OF CHUNG HSI-TUNG'S STATEMENT IN PEOPLE'S DAILY. THEY PANICKED AND SOUGHT OUT AN OFFICER OF THE OVERSEAS CHINESE AFFAIRS OFFICE FOR REASSURANCE THAT THEY WOULD NOT BE DEPORTED BACK TO THE SRV. THE OFFICER WAS NOT REASSURING, SAYING THAT THEY COULD NOT REMAIN IN CHINA INDEFINITELY WITHOUT HAVING THEIR SITUATION CLARIFIED.

8. THE TWO ADVISED THAT THEY FELT THAT THEIR INDETERMINATE STATUS WAS JUST AS MUCH A RESULT OF THEIR SOUTH VIETNAMESE ORIGIN AS IT WAS OF THEIR RELUCTANCE TO BE RESETTLED ON AN OVERSEAS CHINESE FARM. THEY SEE CHUNG'S STATEMENT AS HERALDING A PRC POLICY TO RETURN HOAS FROM SOUTH VIETNAM TO THE SRV WHETHER THEY WANT TO OR NOT.

9. WHEN ASKED ABOUT THE NUMBER OF OTHER SOUTH VIETNAMESE NOW IN CANTON SHARING A SIMILAR "INDETERMINATE" STATUS, THEY REPLIED THAT THERE COULD NOT POSSIBLY BE MORE THAN 2,000, MORE LIKELY 1,500. THEY FELT THAT ALL THESE WOULD BE FACED WITH INVOLUNTARY RETURN TO THE SRV SHOULD THEY NOT FIND RESETTLEMENT IN A THIRD COUNTRY (HSINHUA REPORTED AUGUST 15 THAT CHUNG HSI-TUNG PLACED THE NUMBER OF SOUTH VIETNAMESE REFUGEES IN THE PRC AT FIVE PERCENT OF THE TOTAL, OR AROUND 8,000).

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10. WE THINK THE FEARS OF THE TWO VIETNAMESE ARE EXAGGERATED, SINCE THERE IS NO REAL INDICATION AS YET THAT THE PRC HAS SINGLED OUT THE SOUTHERN REFUGEES IN ORDER TO SEND THEM BACK. IT DOES APPEAR, HOWEVER, THAT THE CHINESE ARE INTERESTED IN SENDING BACK THOSE REFUGEES IT DOES NOT CONSIDER CHINESE NATIONALS, AND THIS COULD INCLUDE SOME FROM THE SOUTH AS WELL AS THE NORTH. IF THE RETURN OF THESE REFUGEES IS CARRIED OUT ON A NON-VOLUNTARY BASIS (AND THIS REMAINS A POSSIBILITY), WE MAY WELL BE FACED WITH PLEAS FROM OTHER ETHNIC CHINESE WHO ARE UNWILLING TO RETURN TO VIETNAM AND HAVE NO PLACE ELSE TO GO. THOMAS

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